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VII. — *Some Questions of Plautine Pronunciation*

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I

EARLY in the sixth century of the city, shortly before the literary activity of Plautus began, original *ō* was changed to *ū* under certain well-known conditions. However, in all instances where *u* or *u* immediately preceded, the *ō* was retained unchanged. This retention may be seen in the nom. and acc. sg. of the *o*-declension, as *seruos equom mortuom*; in the gen. sg. of the *u*-declension, as *senatuos*; in gen. pl., as *duom diuom boyom passuom* (but cf. Sommer, *Handbuch*, p. 426); in extensions like *paruolus*; in verb forms like *metuont uiuont linquont tinguont*, and corresponding passives; in the conj. *quom* and in *uolt uoltis* and similar closed syllables in *uol-*.¹ In these instances the orthographic change *uo>uu* did not begin to come in until about two centuries later, the earliest occurrence being *suus* of the Lex Iul. Mun. of 45 B.C., *CIL* i, 206, and was not adopted in the schools until more than a century after that time, according to the testimony of Quintilian i, 7, 26.

What does the retention of the antique orthography for so long a time signify? Was it retained because it faithfully represented the pronunciation, or was it purely orthographical² and due to other considerations, e.g. the desirability of avoiding *uu*? i.e. may *seruos*, etc., have begun to be pronounced *seruus* as soon as *dolos* became *dolus* — in other words, even before Plautus himself?

The period important to our discussion comprises roughly the three centuries from Plautus to Quintilian, and the consideration of the last of these three centuries — roughly from

¹ Perhaps *quoius* and its derivatives and very probably *quōr* should here be mentioned.

² Dittenberger, *Herm.* vi, 304 anm. 2, and Carnoy, *Latin d' Espagne*, 50, hold that it was purely orthographical.

the Lex Iul. Mun. of 45 B.C. to Quintilian — may well come first, as it may shed some light on the main question during the two centuries preceding. As a preliminary, then, to correcting Brambach's interpretation of Quintilian I, 7, 26, let me point out clearly that the *suis* of the Lex Iul. Mun. of 45 B.C. is not to be interpreted as prophesying a phonetic change to be fulfilled, but as registering a change in pronunciation already accomplished. The fact that it took more than a century to introduce this change in the schools shows that we are here dealing with a question that involves more than a change in pronunciation, — the Romans did not ordinarily take so long a time to change their orthography when only a question of pronunciation was involved, — but that they were confronted with an orthographical question of more than usual difficulty.

The ancient authorities seem unanimous in regarding the question purely as one of orthography for any period of which they treated — Cornutus, Quintilian, Velius Longus, Donatus, Papirianus. Most modern scholars — among them Ritschl, Froede, Brambach, Stolz,¹ Solmsen (all quoted by the latter in his *Studien*, 48) — hold that the retention of the old spellings up to the eighth century of the city represents faithfully the pronunciation up to that time. Lindsay, *Lat. Lang.* 267, suspends judgment.

Although the question has not been adequately treated by them, I should not feel justified in taking up the consideration of it in detail, did I not regard the evidence on which these scholars based their conclusion as reasonably susceptible of another interpretation.

First let me cite the ancient authorities : —

Quintilian I, 7, 26 (cf. I, 4, 11)²: *Nostri praeceptores serum ceruumque u et o litteris scripserunt, quia subiecta sibi vocalis in unum sonum coalescere et confundi nequiret, nunc u gemina scribuntur ea ratione quam reddidi.* neutro sane modo

¹ I have been unable to verify this reference to Stolz.

² The difficulties which Solmsen, *Studien*, 41, sees in harmonizing these two passages, even if real, have no bearing on the question of pronunciation with which I am dealing.

vox quam sentimus efficitur, nec inutiliter Claudius Aeolicam illam ad hos usus adiecerat [i.e. *ser̄us*, etc.]. Brambach's interpretation of *neutro sane modo* (i.e. neither by *seruos* nor by *seruus*) *vox quam sentimus efficitur* requires examination. He interprets this to mean that the vowel sound heard in the last syllable of such words was neither *o* nor *u*, but an intermediate sound, perhaps nearer *u*; but this is not, I think, Q.'s meaning, — else he could hardly have mentioned the Aeolica, *ser̄us*, with full approval, — but that the *vox quam sentimus*, *seruus*, is not faithfully represented phonetically either by *seruos* or by *seruus*, since they are ambiguous. Of course the sound of this *u* may have been open, but not more open than, e.g., that in *dolus*.

Velius Longus (time of Trajan), *GL.* vii, 58, 4 f. : A plerisque superiorum primitiuss et adoptiuss et nominatiuss per u et o scripta sunt, scilicet quia sciebant vocales inter sese ita confundi non posse ut unam syllabam faciant, apparentque eos hoc genus nominum aliter scripsisse, aliter enuntiassent. nam cum per o scriberent, per u tamen enuntiabant. It would be rash to deny altogether the application of this principle of pronunciation to republican times.

Papirianus (fourth or fifth century) *GL.* vii, 161, 4 f. and Cornutus (first century) ib. 150, 5 both quoted by Cassiodorus, show that the orthographical difficulties had not been solved by the change of *o* to *u*.

The statement of Donatus on Terence, *And.* 173, is very important: Et Dauus non recte scribitur, Dauos scriendum, quod nulla littera uocalis geminata unam syllabam facit. The only reason he adduces against the orthography *Dauus* is not that its *-uus* would be pronounced *-yus*, but that it would be taken for *u-us* and thus give most unwarrantedly an additional syllable. (The same objection would not have held against such words as *mortuus*. Would Donatus have favored the orthography *mortuus* for Plautus and Terence?) In his next sentence he anticipates the criticism that the orthography he has just favored would be exposed to by the men of his time: — Sed quia ambiguitas vitanda est nominativi singularis et accusativi pluralis, necessarie pro hac regula

utimur et dicimus Dauſſus ſerjuſus corjuſus. What Donatus means is in substance that there could be no satisfactory solution of the question until a separate sign should have been invented for *u*. Had the Aeolica of Claudius, *s*, been less different from *V* than it was, it might well have remained current ever since.

The evidence on which scholars have based their conclusion, that the change in pronunciation of *seruos* to *servus* was not consummated till the eighth century of the city, is the non-occurrence in inscriptions prior to that time of words containing *-uu*¹ in the situations mentioned on p. 99, the first certain occurrence being *suus* of the Lex Iul. Mun. of 45 B.C. This interpretation of the evidence has seemed to me, if not deceptive, at least unconvincing, and I shall now state my reasons for believing that the *u*-pronunciation went much farther back.²

The instances mentioned on p. 99 in which *uo* is immediately followed by *l* with or without a consonant may be taken up first, since in them the change to the *u*-pronunciation seems to have been retarded; cf.:

CIL. I, 196 *consoluerunt, cosoleretur* (thrice), *tabolam, oqueltod*
 (prob. for *occoito*), *but senatum, Romanus, caputalem, facillumed*.

Eph. Ep. II, 298 *moltare*, *but manum*; cf. *CIL.* XI, 4766, which,
 except that it is a trifle older, shows the same characteristics.

CIL. I, 30 *consol*, *but Cornelius, Lucius, Barbatus*; cf. *CIL.* I,
 530, 531, 539, XIV, 4268.

For Plautus and his contemporaries the *o*-pronunciation is made probable by such instances of assonance as the following:

Amph. I *ut uós in uóstris uóltis*; 114 *uolt uoluptatem*.

¹ The abortive attempts of the time of Accius to use *uu* for *u* are hardly worth mentioning.

² It is to be noted that the change to the *u*-pronunciation was neither due to the loss, early in the eighth century, of *u* before *o*—*equos* > **ecos* > *ecus*—nor did it cause the loss of *u*—*equos* > *equus* > *ecus*,—though the latter series happens to indicate the changes in their proper chronological order.

Caec. Stat. *Aethrio*, 5

Actutum, *uoltis*, empta est; *noltis*, non empta est.

Ennius, *Ann.* 583 M

Auorsabuntur semper uos uostraque uolta.

When did *uolt*, *uolnus*, *uoltus*, etc., begin to be pronounced *uult*, etc.? Varro, in his *Libri Grammatici*, p. 148 Wilm., has given us instances of each vowel in combination with *u*—*uafer*, *uelum*, *uinum*, *uomis*, *uulnus*, and we must inevitably conclude that Varro, in 49 B.C., spelled as well as pronounced *uulnus*. Furthermore, he doesn't speak of this pronunciation as recent, but rather as one of sufficiently long standing to be used as an example, perhaps one which he had observed as true all his life. May not the change in pronunciation *uolnus* > *uulnus* have been carried through at about the same time as *uorto* > *uerto*? However that may be, it seems certain, in view of the epigraphic evidence quoted above, and in view also of the fact that vowel weakening normally came later in accented than in unaccented syllables, that *seruos* began to be pronounced *seruus* at a considerable interval before *uolnus* began to be pronounced *uulnus*.

The inscriptional evidence in favor of the change in pronunciation of *seruos* to *seruus* before the eighth century of the city is, as we might expect, rare and necessarily indirect.

CIL. I, 34, 3 (end of the sixth century A.U.C., just after Terence)
quom = prep. *cum*.

I, 1454, 1 (time of the Gracchi) *qur*, Plautine orthography *quor*,
 Plautine pronunciation *cūr*, *CP. iv*, 297. My case
 is not seriously injured by the length of the vowel in
quōr, as the main thing is that it was pronounced *ū*.

I, 277 (550–560 A.U.C.) *Flaus*, to be taken as shorthand for
Fla(u)us to avoid *uu*, and no more to be taken with
 Ritschl, *Opusc. iv*, 479, for *Flau(o)s* than in Hor.
Sat. II, 7, 2 and 100, and *Epist. II*, 3, 37, *Daus* is
 to be taken for *Dau(o)s*; cf. *Δάος*¹ of Menander's
Epitrepones and *Perikeiromene*.

¹ The transliteration of *Δάος* will give some suggestion of the difficulties the Romans had in dealing with such questions. Four forms may be considered—*Daus*, *Daos*, *Dauus*, *Dauos*. Of these *Daus* was certain to be confusing, as *au*

Occurrences of *uu* in the Fasti before the eighth century of the city may not have any significance, as the *uu* may be due to later restorations, cf. Solmsen *Studien*, 37. The fact that epigraphic evidence in favor of the *u*-pronunciation in the sixth and seventh centuries of the city is so rare is not necessarily to be explained on the theory that the change of pronunciation in these words was retarded, but by the fact that the Romans disliked the combination *uu* by reason of its ambiguity (= *uu*, *uy*, *uu*, or in the time of Accius *ū*). That the Republican Romans had a deep-seated dislike for the combination *uu* is seen with especial clearness in their failure to use it even in words where the sound *uy*¹ had been inherited from the parent language, cf. *iuyenis*, Skt. *yuvan* — which in Plautus' time was spelled *iuenis*.²

NOTE ON *qu + o*

According to Lindsay, *Lat. Lang.* iv, 137 (also Introduction to *Captivi* p. 38, § 27), the labial element in *qu* before *o* as e.g.

in other words was diphthongal, cf. *laus*; *Daos* was not a desirable form, since it would refuse to be lined up with other nouns of the 2d declension; *Dauus* was rejected by Donatus, on *And.* 173 quoted on p. 101; so *Dauos* alone remained — a form which would not be misleading to a Roman who for good reason objected to *uu*.

¹ Solmsen argues (160 f.) that the failure to express *uy* by anything more than *u* was due to the weakness of pronunciation of the *u* — a process of reasoning which is hardly convincing, as the Romans are known to have represented even weak sounds in their writing, as e.g. *h*, and again at other times not to have represented a sound involving doubling, even though it was strong enough to make position; cf. Ennius *Fab.* 98 M

per ego deum sublimas sub(i)ices umidas.

Cf. Lucilius 411 Marx; Horace *C.* i, 17, 26; iv, 7, 17; also what Gellius, iv, 17, says on the subject.

² It may not be off the question to remark that most of our texts of Latin authors, beginning with Cicero, are saved from the ambiguities above noted by the artificial differentiation of *v* and *u*, and that this differentiation often helps us to forget the ambiguities of the orthography of the empire, which we have adopted as our standard. On the other hand, most of our texts of Plautus and Terence fail to differentiate between *v* and *u*, and for what ambiguities actually exist in the standard texts of these authors we have eyes that are particularly keen, as they have previously become accustomed to the standard orthography of imperial times improved by the differentiation of *v* and *u*.

in *loquor sequor* was less than before other vowels as e.g. *loqui sequi loquar sequar*, in fact generally negligible. If this is so, it would tend to show that it was equally negligible in words like *equos equom coquont sequontur*, and that accordingly in the pronunciation of these words it was not strong enough to keep the *o* in *equos*, etc., from becoming *u* in pronunciation at the same time that *dolos* > *dolus* and *dicunt* > *dicunt*.

The dissimilating force of *u* or *u* before *o* may also be questioned, as the lack of permanence in forms like *mortuos seruos minuont uiuont*, precludes *societas* < **sociotas* (cf. *bonitas* < **bonotas*) from being urged as a parallel.

The conservative theory that the change in pronunciation of words like those mentioned on p. 99 was not consummated before the eighth century A.U.C., is based solely on the non-occurrence of the changed orthography before that time. Ordinarily this would be conclusive, but I have thought it worth while to give my reasons for believing that in this particular instance the retention of the old orthography was due to considerations of orthography rather than of pronunciation; that the Romans were opposed to the combination *uu* to such an extent that it was not adopted in the schools until the time of Quintilian; that accordingly the description of the sound given by Velius Longus cannot safely be limited to a time subsequent to the fall of the republic, but may apply to the time of Plautus and Terence as well; and that, lastly, there are a few positive instances even in the sixth and seventh centuries of a *u*-pronunciation for an *o* following *u*.

II

VORRO VORTO VOSTER VOTO VOTURIUS; VERBER VERBUM
VERNA, ETC.

Quintilian I, 7, 25 is authority for the statement that it was Scipio Africanus who introduced the change *uortex* > *uertex*. Thurneysen, *KZ.* xxx, 498, has found this statement confirmed by epigraphic evidence as far as Scipio Africanus the Younger is meant. Thus the change would be post-Terentian.

Solmsen, *Studien*, 19 f., has found that the change *uo* > *ue* was limited to five words and their derivatives, *uorro uorto uoster uoto Voturius*, since they alone are supported in the *uo-* orthography by the evidence of inscriptions or manuscripts or grammarians. He does not include *uerber uerbum uerna*, etc., because in their case neither inscriptions nor manuscripts nor grammarians give any support for any other orthography than that with *ue*, whereas by their side in inscriptions and manuscripts such words as *uorto* occur with the *uo-* spelling. Note that of all these words only *uorto* occurs in inscriptions of the time of Plautus and Terence, and that only in the perfect participial stem.

While Solmsen is correct in his division, I desire to add a little positive evidence regarding the pronunciation of both of these classes of words in Plautus and Terence, as I know of at least one scholar of first rank who holds that *uoster uorto*, etc., even in the time of Plautus, were pronounced *uester uerto*, etc., respectively. But Plautus, with his characteristic fondness for sound effects, has given us a few indications in favor of the *o-* pronunciation in at least two of these words:

uoster: *Amph.* 1 Ut *uos* in *uóstris uoltis*; cf. *Amph.* 8, *Bacch.* 760, *Men.* 793, *Poen.* 1390, *Rud.* 89 a, *Trin.* 452 *uostra nostra*; cf. 467 and

Enn. Ann. 583 M. *auorsabantur semper uos uostraque uolta*.

These examples probably establish the pronunciation for the whole class, and it is well if they do, because the instances of assonance with *uorto* are less good; cf. the line of Ennius quoted above and

Plaut. Cas. 489 *uostro . . . uorsuti*; cf. *Pseud. Trin.* 1047.

Regarding the pronunciation and orthography of the other class — *uerber uerbum*, etc. — scholars have not been lacking who claimed that the development in it was similar to that in *uoster*, i.e.

uester > *uoster* > *uester*,
uerber > *uorber* > *uerber*,

and that *berber* (for *uerber*?) of the Carmen Arvale, *CIL.* I., 28, was without significance. However, the form *uoster* is due to the analogy of *uoster* and *uos*, and no such analogy worked in the form of *uerber* or any of the words of its class, so that *berber* above quoted, if for *uerber*, is significant after all. I add the following instances of assonance to show the pronunciation of these words in Plautus : —

Amph. 180 sum uéro uérna uérbero ;
344 aïn uéro? — aio enim uéro — uérbero.

This would seem to establish the *e* in *uerna* and *uerber* for Plautus, and to these is added *uerba* in

Amph. 1033 uerna, uerba funditas ; cf.
Ter. Haut. 356 tibi sunt parata uerba, huic homini uerbera.